

30 years of community service and voluntarism

By Nadia Takriti Kamal

THE ARAB Cultural Society which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, stands as a testimony to the diversity and vitality of the voluntary sector in our country.

The thought of establishing the society was an attempt to respond to a need, tangible at the time, for a school with a special educational outlook. Patriotic, non-partisan, driven by scientific thinking and strong ethics, determined to provide modern up to date teaching and preserve Arab cultural identity simultaneously.

Funds were raised from concerned individuals and establishments, and volunteers pooled their human capital and expertise to realize their vision. Families, who believed in quality community-driven education, brought in their children, year after year, as classes gradually expanded from kindergarten to *Tawjihi*. The school is steered by an education council of dedicated professionals from various national educational bodies, routinely volunteering their time and effort.

A wealth of activities accumulated over time in other committees along side education. The social committee undertakes some poverty alleviation involvement, rather limited but profound. This helps get poor students through school and university education. It works closely with the local community on varied charitable and civic concerns as they emerge.

The cultural committee runs monthly seminars and lectures on topics relevant to children's upbringing, education, family welfare, as well as social and national concerns.

The embroidery committee produces classic hand-made pieces of national heritage which brings history and art together.

These provide work opportunities for women in low-income areas to help them earn a living and supplement family income, while upper middle class families from different walks of Jordanian society appreciate obtaining these artifacts. The sewing sub-committee produces school costumes and playsuits for almost 850 students annually.

The Alumni Committee is paving its way to represent and bring together the school's graduates, university graduates by now and active members of our national labor force.

The kindergarten established in Wihdat, with so many donations, is a model to serve children from an underprivileged area.

This is merely a glimpse reflecting the daily, persistent and diversified involvement of hundreds of people in this community organization and in solidarity and concerted action. A place which gives room for citizens, old and young, with middle to higher educational establishment profiles, a majority with mere charitable orientation and a limited look to a few sophisticated and tireless women who play low profiles as they nurture others into maturity. Volunteers with whom I had the pleasure to serve in the ranks and files of this NGO over the past two years.

There are issues of critical weight to the future of this organization, among which are:

■ Upholding or amending the organization goals after 30 years of establishment, especially the educational core goal which was built upon pan-Arab background. It is gradually changing focus on the one hand, and something which is being challenged since the mid-eighties by a growing number of institutions with vast resources. It

claims to cater for quality education. Its sheer absorptive capacity and diversity has induced a shift in the clientele of the school, the majority of whom are average middle class white collar professionals who can't afford the more expensive alternatives because of their eroding incomes in an increasingly difficult macro economic situation.

The school earnings from fees hardly covers upgrading school facilities if there is no supplementary income earning involvement. To maintain its record of excellence, the school has to develop a distinct comparative advantage. A real focus on improving quality of education by consolidating critical thinking, offering elective courses, institutionalizing compulsory community service, coping with informalities developments and introducing special summer options, are a few possibilities. Extending bridges with other schools to build economies of scale vis-a-vis teacher training and a community spirit, and consolidated solutions in student issues, is imperative.

■ The amount of dedicated team work and professional voluntary commitment is shifting in nature, in the sense that the individual used to be at the disposal of the institution all along but not any more. The institution has to meet individual needs from within, as volunteers become beneficiaries at the same time. This means a definite shift of membership in the organization and a different composition of participants who are no longer bound by a noble goal worthy of fighting for and standing up to, but who constitute a vested group of clientele. This poses a real challenge in defining voluntarism.

■ The organization has to sharpen its focus in community development for the



underprivileged in low income areas. Efficiency in service delivery, wide coverage and reach out in all activities, be it income generating for women in embroidery, or scholarships and grants, or poverty alleviation or cultural events, are requirements for maintaining the role of the Arab Cultural Society and rationalizing its endeavours to achieve its objectives.

■ The real resources that the society can count on, are its school graduates who work in various professions and have different qualifications and could add new input in its programs and activities, and take new initiatives which may be more

professional and up to date in trying to realize its goals, with vitality and consolidated vision. The challenge is to bring out their loyalty and sense of belonging to the institution at its best, and gear them to pool their energy in constructive group and teamwork to contribute their share in civil society beyond their personal needs.

One looks forward to witnessing an established institution renew its outlook, cadres, target groups, and methodologies, and thus survives into a new era while preserving and invigorating its original noble objectives.

Brotherhood's decision reshuffles political cards

Continued from page 1

Lower House, but that figure later dropped to 15 after two deputies resigned their IAF membership.

The Islamist golden era was after the 1989 elections, which was held under a multi-vote system. The Brotherhood gained 22 seats and about 15.5 percent of the total votes. In both elections Islamist candidates had the highest number of votes.

Mr Thuneibat said, if elections were held without the participation of the Muslim Brotherhood and other opposition parties "the government will end up electing itself, and the coming parliament will have no credibility or legitimacy."

Mr Thuneibat is considered the godfather of the Islamic movement, and serves as an intermediary between the moderates and the hardliners. He is said to have supported the idea of Islamist participation in the parliamentary elections.

He warned against applying pressure or threats against the Islamic movement and added that in case of any pressure the reaction will be negative.

On the other hand, the IAF's Shura Council will hold its meeting on Saturday to discuss the issue. However, Dr. Mohammad Oweidha, secretary of the IAF stressed that the IAF's decision will most likely be in favor of boycotting the elections since "70 percent of the IAF's members are also members of the Muslim Brotherhood."

Three opposition parties have already reacted to the Muslim Brotherhood decision. The leftist People's Democratic Party (Hashd), and two pan-Arabists, the National Action Front and the Jordanian Constitutional Party.

Hashd whose third general conference, last June, decided to participate in the parliamentary elections together with the other forces, reversed its stand and adopted the Muslim Brotherhood's decision.

The Muslim Brotherhood's decision came in response to the will of a wide popular sector. Salim Al Nahas, general secretary of Hashd, said: "The party's third conference decided to participate in the elections on the condition that 'national consensus' and the conditions for an honest and clean democratic elections existed. 'But government practices do not comply with the interests of the country and the people'."

Dr. Muhammad Al Majali, secretary general of Al Ansar Party, member of the opposition alliance, said that his party "supports the boycott decision as the reasons behind it are logical." Al Majali added that Al Ansar party took a decision to boycott the elections two months ago.

Next week, the rest of the opposition parties will also announce their final decision. However, observers argue that it is an uneasy process for the 11-party opposition camp to reverse their decision to participate.

Some opposition figures will contest the elections, if not under their party list, then individually. However, the Jordanian Communist Party and the Jordan Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party are expected to contest the elections, a step which will weaken the opposition.

The 12 Professional Associations (IPA) are debating their next move and are expected to move towards a decision to boycott the elections. But a unanimous decision will not be easy.

In a meeting, early this week, the Council of P.A. Presidents, attended by only six presidents, initially adopted a suggestion presented by Mr. Hussein Mjalli, president of the Lawyers Association, calling on the professional associations to boycott the elections.

Mjalli is backed by some of the associations' presidents, like the Doctors, Engineers, Agricultural Engineers and Dentists.

Ahlan expatriates!

Continued from page 1

Parents became irritated with their nagging children and babies crying. Not a single airport official showed up to investigate the reasons behind the bottleneck.

This was the kind of reception that Jordanian expats received at the airport on Saturday. There is no reason to doubt that this kind of reception takes place every day during the summer.

We all know that we don't have one of the busiest airports in the region—we wish. We all know—and have been lectured to that effect—how important Jordanian expatriates are to our economy—which is in a dire need for their investments and even vacation money.

We remember many years ago when the government even held conferences for Jordanian expatriates and offered them incentives to invest in Jordan.

Regardless of the nationality of those arriving at our points of entry they deserve a better reception. The airport is the first thing a visitor sees of Jordan and his or her experience there leaves a lasting impression.

There is no doubt that much could be done to improve airport facilities—especially those dealing with arriving passengers. The aircooling system should be fixed and the number of counters—with working computers—can be easily increased.

And then maybe we can move a step forward by cutting the number of immigration officers at passport control from two to one—like in all civilized countries. Ideally, checking a passport should not take more than a minute. For weary, sweaty and frustrated passengers arriving at Queen Alia International Airport, it took a lifetime!

Local businessmen divided

Continued from page 1

situation Jordanian companies are facing today is mainly the reason behind complaints of some local businessmen. They run their firms successfully, but they can't promote their products easily, especially after losing traditional Gulf markets since 1991.

Of course, those big company owners do not really feel the burden as small firms do. These are encouraged to participate in the Medpartenariat hoping that it gives them a helping hand, as it is basically a philosophy to assist small and medium size companies which help to promote their products in new markets.

Jordan Cement Factories Marketing Director Mahmoud Subeiri is in an excited mood. He said that companies from Belgium, Spain, Britain and France have shown much interest in buying Jordanian Cement.

But Samer Zureikat from a medium-sized chemical company, is pessimistic. "All [outside companies] have come to sell, this is what we conclude from this conference."

But, he suggests that "we are to blame. We need European businessmen's partnership and technology. So the only way is to go to them and offer our service, instead of waiting for them to come."

Khaled Al Qudri, an executive partner in the Engineering Technical Co. puts the responsibility on promotional campaigns. He says "Jordan is not being given the proper required promotional media campaigns outside."

"We have come to the conference searching for untraditional markets for our products, but, found ourselves wondering who will sell to the other, is it us or the Europeans," he says.

However, some businessmen consider their contacts and meetings with their European counterparts as constructive, at least they have a positive impression about our industrial products. They also described the event as a way to know what European businessmen want from our market.

But the Medpartenariat has a regional angle. It soon became apparent that some European businessmen were

using it as an opportunity to make contacts with Arab businessmen participating.

This is despite the fact that Arab participation in the event was seen by many to be far below the required level.

In addition to Jordan, the host country, only four Arab countries took part: Palestine, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia.

Dr. Halaqi said that the absence of some Arab countries is mainly due to financial and technical reasons, as the EU did not provide financial support for the participating countries.

Generally speaking, Medpartenariat Jordan '97 remains an important economic venue that established a link between Jordanian businessmen and their European counterparts that focuses on the necessity to exchange products, expertise and manpower. This event also paved the way for further cooperation between EU and the countries of the Mediterranean basin in the fields of export, investment, joint ventures and transfer of technology.

Algeria frees leader of Islamic party

Continued from page 1

Hachani was sentenced last week to five years, the period he had already served. But he was stripped of his civil rights for three years. FIS representatives in Europe said it was not clear whether Madani would be allowed to play a political role, and said his release might also be conditional.

Since cancellation of elections in 1992, the military-backed authorities have been bent on eradicating Islamist militants by force, while reshaping the country's political scene to ensure no opposition can again challenge the establishment.

This has been achieved through changes in the Algerian constitution barring parties from exploiting religion for political ends and increasing the powers of the president at the expense of the general assembly.

Algeria last month also held legislative elections which excluded the FIS and gave pro-government parties a majority in the assembly.

A FIS representative in Europe said: "We know they may have released Madani and Hachani just because they think the leaders no longer constitute a danger to them, and this will allow them to project an image of fairness and the return of the rule of law."

"Hachani cannot have political activities for three years and there may be conditions for Madani's release."

Nevertheless, the FIS said the move was a positive step by President Liamine Zeroul and hoped it would lead to negotiations on a political solution.

According to FIS leaders in exile, Madani's release strengthens and gives a single voice to an organization that has been plagued by internal

dissent.

The Algerian government, however, insists the FIS has become irrelevant. The FIS military arm, which is known to attack military targets, no longer represents a serious threat to the regime.

But some opposition leaders in Algeria do not rule out the possibility of a deal between the government and Madani, leading to a FIS call for a truce, perhaps eventually allowing rehabilitation of the party under another name.

FIS representatives in Europe also point out that the release of Madani may be part of a conciliatory pattern, evidenced by President Zeroul's removal this week of the hard-line head of the national gendarmerie.

FIS leaders remain sceptical Madani can call for a truce without first securing the release of Belhaj. There are also doubts that Madani alone can make any significant contribution to ending the violence.

Much of the violence against civilians is blamed on the so-called armed Islamic groups (GIA), which do not appear to respond to a specific political leadership. The FIS has denounced such attacks and distanced itself from the GIA.

Last month's parliamentary elections, the first since the aborted 1992 vote, took place in relative calm. Although marred by alleged fraud, low turnout and massive security measures, it produced Algeria's first multi-party parliament with a nonviolent Islamist party second in the voting.

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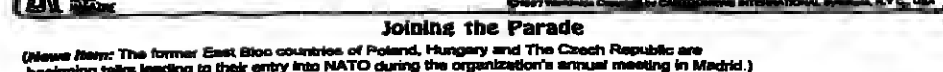
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Keeping the Islamists within

Jordan's policy of incorporating the Islamists into political power-sharing has paid up. It should not be abandoned now regardless of the pressures that our political system may be witnessing now. The real task now is to address the grievances submitted by the Islamists, not to ignore them. Open and honest dialogue is a good way to start. ■

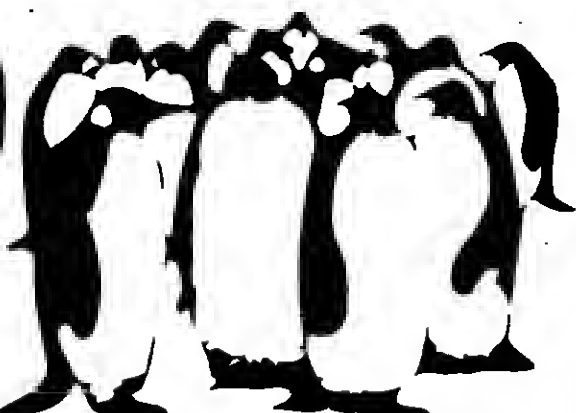
Kuwait leaders from Vice President Al Gore. Kuwaiti officials assert publicly that they have not made a final decision and will do so only after each model has been thoroughly evaluated on the basis of cost and performance. In private, however, they say they might buy the Chinese guns for reasons that have nothing to do with range, price or accuracy and everything to do with politics. Eager to gain a foothold in one of the world's richest arms markets, China has hinted it will

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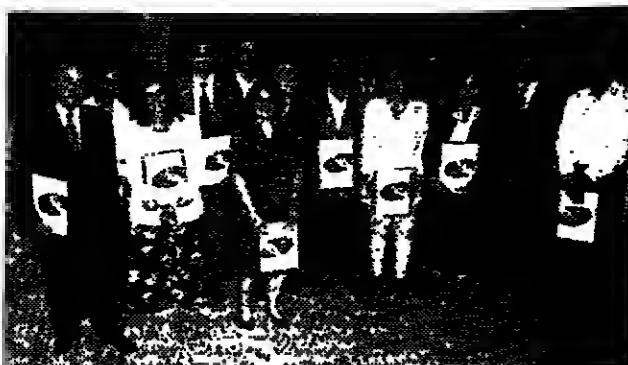


used and worked upon, lest by the end of this century we will only have our language to remind us of our folkloric contribution to the world civilization. ■

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AROUND
TOWNAir France honors
top travel agents
at the Bisharat
Golf Club

AIR FRANCE held its annual dinner for the top travel agents at the Bisharat Golf Club last Sunday 29 June. Certificates were given by the Air France Regional Manager, Jordan/Iraq, Mr Jean-Jacques Ledauhin to top travel agents. Orientals for Travel & Tours, Al Tawfiq Travel, Al Badiyah Travel & Tourism received golden certificates. Silver ones were given to Falcons Travel & Tourism, Al Waha Tourism, eastern services and



Pan Pacific Travel & Tourism, International Traders, Besours, Bisharat Tours corporation and Near East Tourist Center received bronze certificates. ■

Photo exhibition

'Jerusalem in
Danger'

By K. Attah
Special to The Star

A photographic exhibition on the images of the identity of Jerusalem, is currently being held at the exhibition hall of Al 'Asriya school. Its theme, "Jerusalem in Danger," is hosted by Al 'Asriya School at Tia Ali, Amman. The 96-photographic works are by the renowned Palestinian photojournalist Khalid Zaghari.

According to Mrs Maqboulia Al Yahya, principal of the Al 'Asriya school, the purpose of the exhibition is "to tell the world how Palestinians are suffering from Israeli brutality."

Immediately upon walking into the hall, you realize that you have entered an exhibition that is more than a collection of photographs hung in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

By exhibiting Al Zaghari works he is given the opportunity to create a form of communication to send his message across. His collection are both impressive and expressive of what they reveal than in what they don't.

Take for instance the first two pictures on display, photos of Al Aqsa mosque where about half a million worshippers praise Allah in the holy month of Ramadan. The photographs, taken in 1996, were shot in a classic manner. Next to them is a photo showing a group of men submissively prostrating to Allah in Al Aqsa Mosque during *Leilatil Qadr*.

Much of the exhibition may be seen as a display of courage and determination. Among the photos are an unarmed Palestinian youth challenging an armed Israeli soldier. The Palestinian youth has his mouth wide opened, a kind of saying "you can shoot me in the mouth, I'm ready to die for my fatherland."

Other images in the exhibition, a school

boy of about 10 years old, wonders what is happening and seems to ask the armed Israeli soldier "what is going on?" Another photo shows an armed Israeli soldier intimidating a Palestinian woman in the city of Ramallah.

The photographs bear witness to Jerusalem being in real danger, with images of Jahliah Arab Bedouins ejected from their tents and of bulldozers carrying out destructive operations in east Jerusalem. Other photos show Palestinians praying in protest on Jabal Abu Ghennim on a Friday in the midst of bulldozers.

The most remarkable photos of Jerusalem in danger are those showing the damaged mosque as a result of the excavation under it carried out by the Israelis to find the lost temple of Solomon which they believe is buried under the Al Aqsa mosque. The restoration of the damaged walls of the mosque is another masterpiece. The photo exposing the broken parts of the south-western wall is a genuine confirmation of the alarming situation in Jerusalem.

Zaghari has taken the opportunity to express his despair and anxiety through photographs. Walking to the area on the left of the exhibition room, he shows the visitor the bru-



Zaghari.



ality and violence of the Israeli soldiers. The most horrible pictures are found in this section of the room. A woman is seen weeping over the death of a husband. Another woman has a badly damaged face in blood.

Perhaps the best example of courage and determination is the picture depicting confrontation between young Palestinians throwing stones and Israeli soldiers with sophisticated weapons. Frustration and anger are portrayed

by the exhibit showing burning of Israeli flags and the effigy of the Israeli Prime Minister.

Through a wealth of outstanding impression and expression in the language of photographs, Zaghari has successfully captured the visitor and explained his vision of a confusing and violent situation in our contemporary world. The exhibition continues till 30 July. ■

Political comedy rocks stage with laughter

By Nabila Al Rifai
Special to The Star

Comedy and realism are today a common combination on the stage in Jordan. Politics and mirth, or the ability to tackle issues in a satirical way has taken a dominant lead in Jordanian theater.

And hence the latest theatrical comedy, *Ya Dar Mo Dakhalek Sharr* (Oh house no evil has entered you). Written by the famous comedian, Hassan Al Ibrahim, the play is already sending audiences into fits of laughter.

The play, however, has a serious message. Essentially it is about domination, culture and nationalism. The gist of the comedy is about Marzook, a man who falls under the spell of an American director by the name of Alice. She in turn forces him to sign a contract to make a film about ancient and modern Arab history, in the way she wants.

Thus famous characters such as 'Antara, Al Khansa' and Hatem Atta' are played out. In addition, various historic tragedies such as the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, the '67 Six Day War and Western intellectual domination and Arab resistance to it, are satirically portrayed in this comedy.

The play was directed by Muhammad Helmi. Anwar Khalil, Staker Jaber, Ase-



ma Morjan, Wafa' Abdullah, Wijdan Al Abooshi, Ayman Al Sabah, Ghandi Sabar, Najeh Kodemat, and Abd Al Majeed Abu Talem also star in the play.

The ending of this play is probably the strangest thing of all. It ends with Marzook refusing to forge Arab history after awakening from his drugged state of consciousness.

The odd thing about it though, is his participation in a song called *Ahle Bismaha Wa Turabiho* for Abdel Haleem Hafez, which marked Marzook's nationalistic awakening. A funny touch to say the least!

The comedy depicted psychological conflicts as well as intellectual ones, in a very effective and stirring way.

For as it is known, comedy can sometimes be the surest way of getting a point across. But the ending of the comedy seems to have been a bit of a put down. This being especially after the professional performance that was presented.

It nevertheless has to be mentioned that the directing of the play was done with extreme skill. The mental and hypothetical conversations that take place, presented the mind as the center stage for the story. Thus, it was as if a play within a play was in action.

Furthermore, the liveliness and smoothness of the chain of events and thoughts, was masterful. Indeed, Hassan Ibrahim succeeded in presenting a new style in movement and performance, as well as fresh new talents to the stage. Yet, music, lighting, costumes and decoration should have been further enhanced to achieve the desired effect and accredited acclaim that this theatrical comedy deserves. ■

Prestigious Dunes
Club opens next year

Entertaining, exciting and new!! Dunes Club opens in West Amman in spring '98. A sports and social club, it is the first of its kind in the region.

Located beside the Amman National Park, 400 meters away from the airport road and 10 minutes away from the seventh circle, the 'Dunes Club' is built to resemble and function like a country club! A place where families, businessmen and youngsters can spend their weekends, hold business meetings and enjoy social occasions.

The project's overall cost is approximately JD 10 million, and this comes from investors and bank loans. Mr Shaher Ahmad Al Tabba' has been appointed as the head of the board of directors. As for general management, Mr Shafiq Ilias Thabit and Mr Ramzi Farah Masarweh will be responsible for that. Mr Khaled Mansour Al Tabba' is responsible for marketing side of the project. In addition, His Royal Highness Prince Faisal Bin Al Hussein is one of the investors of this would-be prestigious club.

Already, 300 families have joined for membership to the club. About 500 memberships will be granted before the opening, 500 during the first year after the opening, and another 500 during the second year.

The Dunes Club will have the biggest swimming pool in Jordan, as well as an indoor swimming pool, restaurants and a canteen, eight tennis courts, three squash courts, two sports fitness halls, outdoor courts for handball and basketball, a kindergarten, a health and beauty center and saunas for both men and women. There will also be private meetings rooms, party halls and an outside terrace. Around 175 persons will be employed by the club.

The well-known 'International Club Services' organization, are providing the club with consultants for the design and activity of 'Dunes Club'. Country clubs in London and Milan have also been serviced by this group of consultants.

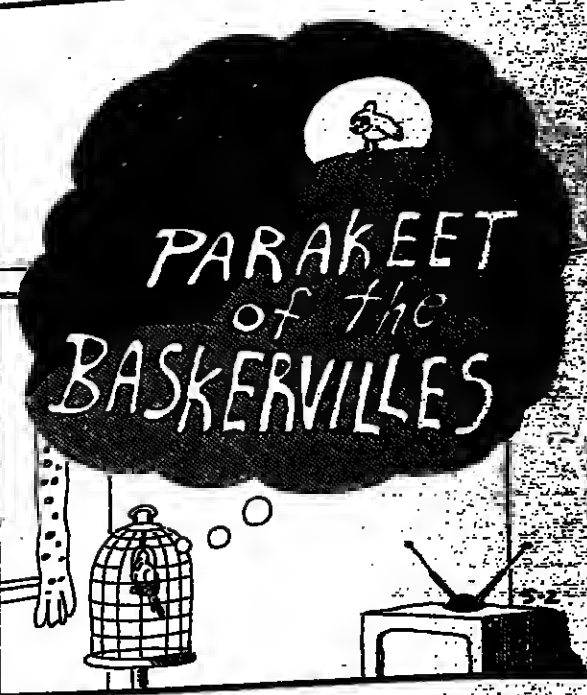
It seems that clubs such as the Orthodox Club and the Royal Automobile Club will be facing some competition come spring '98. ■



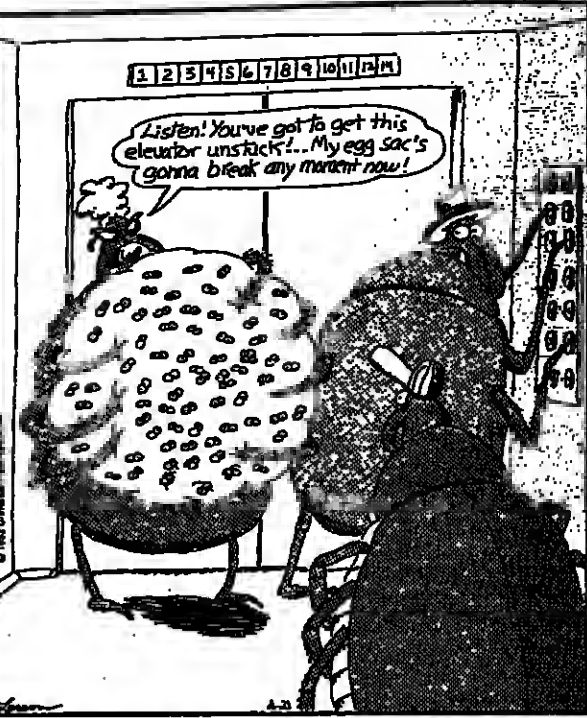
Dunes Club Amman... now under construction

THE FAR SIDE

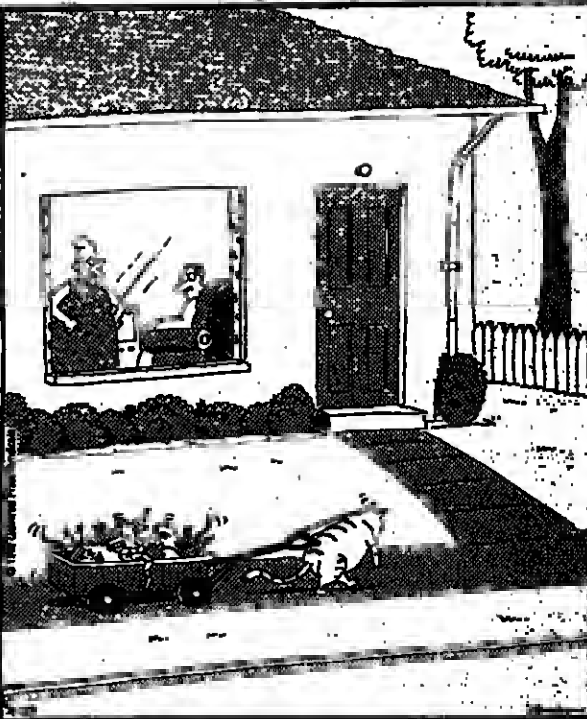
By GARY LAY



Buddy's dreams



High drama at the Arthropod Trade Center



SLAPSTIX

There are two sides to every question: My side and the wrong side!

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AGENDA

Exhibitions

■ "Jerusalem in Danger" photo exhibition by Palestinian photographer Khalid Al Zaghari continues at the Modern Educational School till 31 July.

■ Photography exhibition by Jan Kassay, continues at the French Cultural Centre till 29 July.

■ Artworks of Ali Al Ghoul continues at the Greater Amman Municipality Cultural Dept till 31 July.

■ An exhibition entitled "Silver Jewelry" continues at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation till 20 July.

■ "The Contemporary Arab Artists Exhibition" showing the works of more than 60 artists from the Arab world, continues at Darat al Funun, runs till 24 July.

■ An exhibition entitled "Silver Jewelry" continues at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation till 20 July.

■ Film *Le ruffian* at The French Cultural Center, Monday 21 July, at 8:30 pm. (Fre.)

■ *Maigret* at British Council, Tuesday 22 July, at 5:00 pm. (Eng.)

■ *Playdays on the Move* at British Council, Wednesday 23 July, at 5:00 pm. (Eng.)

Nations debate

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Nations debate whether to join the US by being more like the US

Is the mouse mightier than the cell phone?

The Information Imperative Index ranks 55 countries on the basis of their ability to access, absorb and effectively utilize information. Combined, the ranked countries account for 97 percent of worldwide expenditures on information technology. First presented last year, the index is prepared annually by World Times Global Research and International Data Corporation. Of the 20 variables underlying the index, five relate directly to personal computers—an emphasis that is tempered by the reality that the average price of a PC can, in many countries, be calculated in multiples of annual per capita income



Comparing apples to oranges

Where's the PC for the rest of us?

By Bernie Yee
THE COMPUTER FOR the rest of us, we were once told by a gleaming Silicon Valley giant, was the Macintosh. The IBM PC was mired in an old text-based operating system, while the Macintosh offered easy, point-and-click, computing. Apple Computer was half right. The mouse-driven, GUI system was to be the model for computing—except that it came in the form of the Intel/Microsoft platform rather than the minds at Apple. While some moan the virtual monopoly this "Wintel" alliance has over our computing, the sheer horsepower on the desktop would have boggled the minds of the mainframe computer designers working only a decade ago. The nearest computer store in America can supply an eager customer with a "home" multimedia system that has many times the computing power used to put a man on the moon.

But—at the risk of framing the question in a nation-centric focus—is the PC revolution a peculiar American phenomenon, rolling out from North America and affecting only nations most culturally aligned with the US? While technophiles from *Wired* magazine to *Newsweek* look to a day where new media access is commonplace in the US, many millions of people around the world have never made a simple telephone call. And now, as the US computer market shows signs of being saturated, today's silicon giants like Intel and Microsoft are looking to create complete, sub-\$1,000 solutions for the rest of America. Web TV and network computers are two examples of their efforts. But to date, the closest mass-market computer platform that exists sits in the hands of a younger demographic—a Nintendo 64 or Sony

digital interaction. But that does not presuppose the same hardware platform. In fact, the telephone is a good example. The copper wire that serves as the backbone of America's plain old telephone service is now too expensive to serve less-developed nations. Everyone can find a telephone useful, but the means of access vary. In parts of the world, wireless technology has emerged as the most cost-efficient telephone network. Israel boasts a nearly-ubiquitous cellular phone-to-telephone population.

Technology cost is a major issue. The information revolution has the possibility of being one of the most divisive class forces since the concept of personal property. The cutting-edge computer has dramatically increased processing since the first "personal computer" in the late 1970s, but the cost of entry for such technology has remained relatively constant at US\$3,000 to \$4,000.

A survey once revealed that roughly 63 percent of the US population had no interest in a PC. So, as the market becomes saturated, PC designers are looking to create complete, sub-\$1,000 solutions for the rest of America. Web TV and network computers are two examples of their efforts. But to date, the closest mass-market computer platform that exists sits in the hands of a younger demographic—a Nintendo 64 or Sony

PlayStation. How will other nations' lower annual incomes afford the cost of the latest PC?

Nor is this question limited to poorer countries. It remains an issue in the ultimate market for early technology adopters—Japan. Compact discs, MiniDisc, DVD, digital imaging products, digital television are all technologies that were available to Japanese consumers years before the US. Japanese CD adoption was a full five years ahead of the US.

But Japan is not always an accurate barometer of things American; technology that has become very popular there—PHS phones and MiniDisc—have yet to enjoy the same popularity in the US. Conversely, PC adoption has been sluggish in Japan. Only a few years ago, dedicated word processing "computers" out-

home is not particularly roomy, and PCs take up room. And while playing computer games is the number one or two usage for American PCs, Japanese consumers took video gaming to an art long ago, developing console systems that work with television, have superior graphics and sound better. By the time PCs came along, local tastes were well established, and those tastes didn't include the clunky IBM PC compatible technologies. PC adoption rates are rising in Japan, however, and the Internet has captured enough of the popular imagination to be a good bet for a global communications platform. But the rising popularity of the Wintel technology carries some important footnotes: the cost of a computer is still prohibitively expensive in countries like China, where the average yearly income roughly equals one month's rent in New York City. And that's why pirates, copying software and hardware, have always flourished in Asia. Those users want technology, but on their terms—not on Intel, Microsoft or US terms. And since international enforcement of intellectual property rights is no simple matter, Asians will still be able to buy Microsoft applications for a few US dollars.

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN CUMULATIVE SCORES SINCE 1996 INDEX, TOP FIVE AND BOTTOM FIVE COUNTRIES

Hard drive			
Japan	+18.36%	Ecuador	+1.69%
Malaysia	+17.65%	Germany	-0.08%
Singapore	+16.96%	New Zealand	-2.58%
Korea	+15.72%	Sweden	-2.60%
Finland	+12.84%	Mexico	-4.47%
		Download	

SOURCE: WORLD TIMES GLOBAL RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL DATA CORPORATION

numbered PCs there. And the Internet? An English-speaking network. The reasons for slower PC adoption? Real estate. The traditional Japanese

the shelf ease of use. Shops in China the size of a walk-in closet can open, take orders, and assemble motherboards, hard drives, chassis and operating systems to



THE 1997 INFORMATION IMPERATIVE INDEX

Measuring social, information, and computer infrastructures

SKATERS
These countries are fully in tune with the fast pace and computerized procedures of the information age, reflecting an established infrastructure and computer literate population.

COUNTRY	SOCIAL	INFORMATION	COMPUTER	OVERALL SCORE
United States	544 (2)	2,819 (1)	2,433 (1)	4,987
Finland	536 (3)	938 (13)	2,117 (2)	3,591

COUNTRY	SOCIAL	INFORMATION	COMPUTER	OVERALL SCORE
Sweden	485 (9)	1,235 (5)	1,722 (7)	3,442
Denmark	482 (9)	1,280 (4)	1,688 (8)	3,440
Norway	518 (5)	1,857 (6)	1,848 (4)	3,423
Canada	573 (1)	1,135 (9)	1,611 (10)	3,319
Netherlands	493 (7)	1,193 (7)	1,613 (9)	3,299
Switzerland	463 (13)	1,621 (11)	1,789 (6)	3,273
New Zealand	525 (4)	1,289 (8)	1,484 (12)	3,248
United Kingdom	461 (15)	1,212 (10)	1,571 (11)	3,244
Japan	451 (17)	1,422 (3)	1,388 (13)	3,233
Australia	463 (16)	871 (19)	1,815 (5)	3,139
Singapore	282 (40)	824 (17)	1,859 (3)	2,965
Hong Kong	487 (23)	1,037 (10)	1,182 (15)	2,826
Germany	467 (12)	824 (17)	1,204 (14)	2,495
Austria	496 (8)	816 (20)	1,182 (17)	2,414
Israel	412 (22)	879 (14)	1,123 (16)	2,414
France	470 (18)	930 (12)	965 (21)	2,374
Belgium	463 (13)	821 (15)	1,052 (19)	2,336
Ireland	428 (19)	772 (21)	1,063 (18)	2,263

SPRINTERS
These nations are moving purposefully along the information pathway, their citizens absorbing new technologies for personal and professional use with a measure of caution and conviction.

COUNTRY	SOCIAL	INFORMATION	COMPUTER	OVERALL SCORE
Taiwan	365 (30)	842 (18)	736 (23)	1,943
Korea	469 (21)	453 (33)	999 (20)	1,921
Italy	490 (24)	746 (23)	752 (22)	1,896
Spain	427 (15)	748 (22)	583 (24)	1,758
Czech Rep.	413 (20)	675 (25)	566 (25)	1,654
UAE	236 (46)	695 (24)	418 (28)	1,349
Portugal	262 (31)	451 (34)	498 (27)	1,311
Greece	378 (28)	556 (26)	376 (32)	1,302
Hungary	385 (25)	520 (28)	364 (33)	1,269
Poland	381 (26)	477 (30)	298 (36)	1,156
Argentina	369 (29)	466 (31)	285 (37)	1,130
Chile	354 (32)	350 (41)	407 (31)	1,111
Bulgaria	333 (34)	535 (27)	195 (45)	1,063
Russia	413 (20)	455 (32)	193 (46)	1,061
Malaysia	238 (48)	329 (44)	591 (26)	1,060
South Africa	323 (36)	271 (47)	411 (38)	1,005

STRIDERS
These countries are progressing in a steady, if sometimes leisurely way, towards an information society, trying with new technologies while relying on many older ones.

COUNTRY	SOCIAL	INFORMATION	COMPUTER	OVERALL SCORE
Venezuela	333 (34)	395 (38)	271 (49)	999
Colombia	227 (49)	351 (40)	416 (29)	994
Brazil	242 (44)	424 (35)	318 (35)	984
Costa Rica	332 (33)	326 (45)	283 (38)	961
Mexico	271 (41)	394 (39)	275 (50)	948
Ecuador	278 (42)	488 (36)	224 (42)	903
Panama	380 (28)	283 (53)	360 (34)	853
Thailand	250 (43)	310 (46)	200 (41)	828
Jordan	236 (45)	487 (37)	182 (49)	805
Romania	371 (27)	271 (47)	130 (51)	772
Philippines	321 (37)	229 (50)	156 (44)	737
Peru	365 (28)	217 (52)	153 (46)	715
China	119 (54)	483 (29)	118 (55)	712
Turkey	223 (50)	341 (42)	115 (54)	679
Saudi Arabia	112 (55)	334 (43)	219 (43)	665
India	240 (46)	218 (51)	116 (53)	574
Indonesia	148 (53)	245 (48)	183 (48)	566
Egypt	185 (50)	176 (54)	147 (50)	518
Pakistan	171 (52)	182 (53)	129 (52)	482

SOURCES
IDC 1996 Worldwide Black Book; IDC Proprietary Research; UNDP Human Development Report; UN Statistical Yearbook; World Development Indicators; The World Bank; World Telecommunication Development Report, ITU; Freedom House; www.thelists.com; www.nw.com

FACTORS COMPRISED THE INDEX

- Social Infrastructure**
 - Secondary school enrollment
 - Tertiary school enrollment
 - Newspaper readership
 - Press freedom
 - Civil liberties
- Information Infrastructure**
 - Telephone lines/capita
 - Telephone faults/line
 - Radio ownership/capita
 - Fax ownership/capita
 - Cellular phones/capita
 - Cable/satellite television coverage
- Computer Infrastructure**
 - PCs installed/capita
 - Home PC shipped/household
 - Government/commercial PCs shipped/non-agricultural work force
 - Education PCs shipped/student and faculty
 - Networked PCs %
 - Software/hardware spending
 - Internet service providers
 - Internet hosts/capita

order. It's easy with IBM compatible systems, impossible with Apple's Macintosh, which comes completely assembled.

The IBM compatible PC has dominated the American market, and companies like Intel and Microsoft are looking to establish new market dominance overseas. But there's no question that while new markets are forming outside the US, the "industry standards" set by big American firms have shallow roots in overseas soil.

Can a new standard emerge around the world? You bet. Neither Intel nor Microsoft has gained market dominance internationally. Is anyone at Apple—or anywhere else—listening? The world is still waiting for the computer for the rest of us.

BERNIE YEE, A NEW YORK-BASED ENTERTAINMENT LAWYER, IS A COLUMNIST FOR Next Generation.



Byting into the Budget

Never mind income disparity—the price of information and computing equipment varies greatly between the nations of the developed and developing world. How much does it cost for the average citizen of the world to catch a ride on the information superhighway? Just as the Big Mac Index measures hamburger purchasing power, PC Index indicates the price of comparable computer systems between the skaters, striders, sprinters, and strollers in the Information Imperative Index.

The price shown is for a laptop personal computer with 16 megabytes RAM, 1.4 gigabit hard drive, 6X CD ROM, and standard screen.

Skaters	In US \$	Striders	In US \$
United States (1)	\$3,999	Taiwan (21)	\$4,019
		Spain (24)	\$4,763
		Chile (32)	\$5,403
		Malaysia (35)	\$3,461
Sprinters	In US \$	Strollers	In US \$
Sweden (3)	\$4,949	Brazil (39)	\$5,318
Denmark (4)	\$3,974	Costa Rica (40)	\$5,501
Norway (5)	\$6,796	Mexico (41)	\$5,670
Australia (12)	\$4,659	Thailand (44)	\$3,634
Hong Kong (14)	\$3,481		
Ireland (20)	\$4,372		

Public telephone monopolies strangle all aspects of IT

In Africa, the spider is too busy eating other spiders to spin a web

By Amolo Ng'weno

IN TANZANIA, A PERSONAL computer costs ten times the US\$630 per capita gross domestic product (GDP). This is one of a number of formidable barriers that stand between Africans and the information revolution. It is a revolution based on dramatic recent gains in the affordability and accessibility of telephones and personal computers. Unfortunately, most of these gains have had very little impact on the average African.

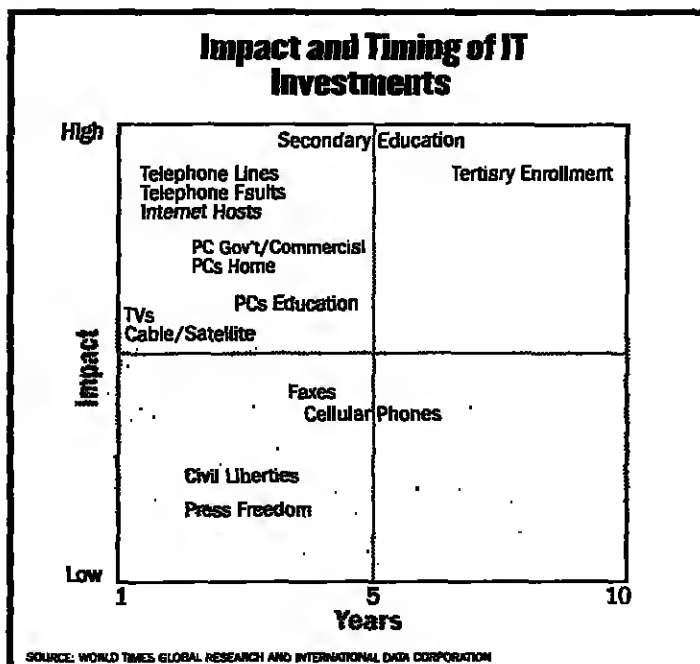
While most large and medium-sized businesses in Africa are starting to computerize and computer sales are growing rapidly, this is basically restricted to the capital cities and a few formal-sector workers. With PCs and the necessary software costing upward of US\$4,000 (duties and shipping mean the prices are often much higher than in the US), virtually no-one has a PC at home. Half of the African population has never used a telephone—even in industrial areas, telephone lines are difficult to acquire, expensive (they're metered by the minute) and frequently of bad quality.

Frustratingly, this same revolution offers the people of Africa a unique opportunity to catch up with the developed world at low cost, at least compared to the cost of developing education, finance and trading through conventional libraries, schools, banking, information transfer and commercial transactions.

But even a relatively low cost is too much for most Africans, and community options for Internet access are limited by a combination of high investment costs, the unavailability of telephone lines in poor and rural areas and the lack of minimally-trained personnel to set up and staff community

cybercafes or school Internet access points. Teledensity in Kenya, which is relatively advanced within Africa, is less than one line per hundred in the rural areas and about 5 lines in the capital city. Payphones are widespread, including in small towns, but they don't always work. Many other African countries have less than one line per hundred people overall, including Uganda (0.25), Ethiopia (0.3) and the Central African Republic (0.3).

Why the difficulty? In Africa, state monopolies have long believed that only they are willing to invest in rural telephony. As a reward for investing in the rural areas, only they should be allowed to capture the revenues from international, long distance and local telephone service. The result: waiting lists are several years long even in the cities.



SOURCE: WORLD TIMES GLOBAL RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL DATA CORPORATION

Yet technology catch-up is within our reach in Africa. New technologies are constantly being developed that will help to reduce some of these barriers.

Non-PC terminals are being developed that will cost a lot less to the end

World Bank gets info religion for development

Wishing for an abacus in a sea of IT faithful

By Crocker Snow Jr.

IF YOU WANT to produce leftist revolutionaries, give Third World students scholarships to American universities. If you want free market conservatives, give them scholarships to Russia.

This parable of the 1980s has died with the end of the Cold War, but its counter-intuitive lesson remains. The epicenter of a religious order is rarely the best place to produce converts.

A late-June World Bank meeting in Toronto entitled *Global Knowledge—subtitled Knowledge for Development in the Information Age*—is the latest case in point. The vastness of the subject combined with the pat, positive IT prejudices of the participants left a disconcerting, and somewhat unconvincing aftertaste. The ambitious conference, sponsored by the World Bank and supported by a variety of public institutions and private enterprises, drew a range of international government ministers, development experts, networked NGOs

and IT industry types. They gathered to celebrate the shared perception that information technology represents the greatest tool ever for rapid and equitable human development.

The turnout, some 2,200 from 143 countries (one third on scholarships from the World Bank) indicated a very special appetite. But the very architecture of the conference, with 115 workshops and seven tracks of inquiry spread among four hotels, was awkward in the extreme. And IT didn't help make it easier. The only imparting of knowledge was unstructured, undisciplined and unprioritized.

With workshops entitled "Learning Organizations and Knowledge Management" and "Capacity Building in Information Technology and Connectivity," this participant felt that he'd fallen through the looking glass. Oh for a straightforward, humanistic "Grandma's Lessons to Live By," the "Boy Scout Handbook" or "Seven Blunders of the World," the list of universal mistakes which lead to violence that Mohandas Gandhi gave to his grandson. There was a sameness, a uniformity of views expressed that triggered skepticism.

Yes of course, as the World Bank's Jim Wolfensohn and the UN's Kofi Annan put it, connectedness is critical to future equitable human development. True, as Costa Rica's president Miguel Figueres stated, computers make distance learning and education a real time reality.

Yes, as the World Bank's chief economist Joseph Stiglitz brayed, deregulation

of monopolistic telecom companies in many a developing country is critical to providing equal access.

Interestingly, as Michael Dell of Dell Computers explained, there is a correlation between PC usage, productivity and labor costs.

But such a meeting of development types gathered around the values and virtues of personal computers and inter-linked networks had a disquieting tone of techno-righteousness that almost demanded a libertarian, Luddite reaction in response. Rare was the sideways glance or the flash of fun that an unlikely speaker, Kate White of Black & White

Communications, showed in exclaiming that, "in today's anonymous world, complete strangers ask how big my hard drive is!"

Many of the workshops were case study oriented. Distant stories of good works involving new information technologies being used to meet the most basic of human needs abounded. Underlying almost every one was the drive of an individual, not the capacities of a hard drive

needs—food, health and education—abounded. Underlying almost every one was the drive of an individual, not the capacities of a hard drive. If the possibilities of information technology loom, so too do the pitfalls.

It isn't all that easy to link disparate societies up around central formulas and at the same time retain full cultural identity. There's nothing simple about educating people in computer use and valued computer application. With an Internet dominated by Western (and English language) ways, means and methodology, it's daunting for non-Western nations to inoculate themselves against the gravity of information imperialism.

Dell, the 31-year-old wonder who dropped out of the University of Texas and has turned his company into the largest computer sales company in the world, gave one of few keynotes by a businessman before a plenary lineup of inter-governmental personalities. He squandered the opportunity to deliver a reality check.

Dell's short speech was unoriginal in content and a little patronizing in tone. With all the power of his computers and a panoply of graphics programs at his disposal, his presentation didn't reflect the human experience. Before a banquet audience of about 1,000, with two large screens to project his facial expressions and passions, he chose to focus the audience on three, word-covered slides. Dehumanizing digitalism.

The Global Knowledge conference convened on the day the technology column appeared in the *New York Times* under the title: "Are the high technology wonders of today any less sinkable than the *Titanic*?" Characterizing numerous state of the art advances that the *Titanic* represented before its demise, Ed Rothstein, the paper's cultural critic-at-large, concluded by quoting an editorial in the *Belfast Morning News* written in June 1911—before the *Titanic* was even launched.

"It is difficult to understand why the owners and builders named this ship *Titanic*. The Titans were a mythological race who came to believe they'd conquered nature, who thought they'd achieved power and learning greater than Zeus himself, to their ultimate ruin. He smote the strong and daring Titans with thunderbolts; and their final abiding place was in limbo beneath the lowest depths of the Tartarus, a sunless abyss below Hades."

The global information clan might reflect on this a bit. And while they're at it, where does the name Java come from?

CROCKER SNOW JR. IS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE WORLD PAPER.

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ENGLISH PROGRAM

SATURDAY

12:00—Holy Quran
12:30—French Program
13:00—Neighborhood
13:30—French Program
14:00—New Headlines
14:30—Haitian with Mr. Cooper
15:00—Magazine: *World*
15:30—From
16:00—New Time
16:30—News at Ten
17:00—Magazine
17:30—Feature Film

SUNDAY

12:00—Holy Quran
12:30—French Program
13:00—America's Home
13:30—Video
14:00—English Program
14:30—American Chart
15:00—From
15:30—French Program
16:00—News at Ten
16:30—New Headlines
17:00—Fresh Prince of B
17:30—From
18:00—Chinua A. Chidiebere
18:30—Cinema
19:00—National Geographic
19:30—Renegeade
20:00—News at Ten
20:30—Fine West Wind
21:00—Night

MONDAY

12:00—Holy Quran
12:30—From
13:00—Neighborhood
13:30—Deep Water Haven
14:00—Ocean Girl
14:30—Nature by Prof.
15:00—French Program
15:30—News at Ten
16:00—New Headlines
16:30—Murphy Brown
17:00—The Grand Sed
17:30—Haitian
18:00—Highlander

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15 Country
16 Sooty
17 Under
18 Sooty
19 Wood
20 President
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Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

MOI

«La politique de Netanyahu conduit la région à la guerre et au chaos». Dans son interview accordée au journal français, le Figaro, Yasser Arafat, président de l'Autorité Palestinienne, tire la sonnette d'alarme. Les territoires palestiniens sont effectivement au bord de l'explosion : affrontements quasi-quotidiens à Hébron et à Bethléem avec des relents d'intifada, poursuite de la colonisation dans l'ensemble de la Cisjordanie y compris Jérusalem-Est, menaces quotidiennes dans la bande de Gaza avec l'extension des colonies et la destruction de maisons...

Hélas, depuis plusieurs mois, il ne se passe pas un jour sans un blessé. Mais le plus terrifiant réside dans l'apparition d'une guerre larvée des religions : c'est la caricature joyeuse à l'égard du prophète Mohamed, ce sont les Corans déchirés par des soldats israéliens, c'est encore cette couverture de magazine insultante pour la Vierge Marie des chrétiens. Même si les autorités israéliennes parlent d'explosion isolée et ont présenté leurs excuses, il n'empêche que la politique de Netanyahu crée un climat favorable au développement du fanatisme religieux dans les deux camps.

D'ailleurs, le gouvernement israélien semble approuver les groupes extrémistes juifs en poursuivant officiellement le creusement des tunnels au-dessous de la mosquée Al Aqsa, troisième lieu saint de l'islam et par toute une série de mesures visant à gommer le caractère arabo-islamique de la ville sainte. La coloration religieuse que prennent les événements depuis quelques temps ne fait qu'attiser le feu, dont la première étincelle fut la reconnaissance par le congrès américain de Jérusalem comme « capitale unifiée » d'Israël, il y a un mois.

Désormais, la colère a gagné l'ensemble des territoires palestiniens. Dans la bande de Gaza, des affrontements se sont produits pendant plusieurs jours laissant deux morts et une centaine de blessés.

Mais c'est Hébron, la ville-symbole de toutes ces tensions. Là-bas, ils sont 400 colons juifs face à 120 000 Palestiniens. A eux-seuls, ces 400 peuvent mettre fin irrémédiablement au processus de paix. Selon des chiffres israéliens, le nombre total des colons dans les territoires palestiniens est estimé à 4% de la population israélienne. Question : faut-il laisser le sort de la paix régionale à la merci d'une minorité ? ■

De Gaza, Hassan Balawi

Elections

Les Frères musulmans défient le gouvernement

Coup de théâtre sur la scène politique jordanienne. Pour la première fois depuis sa naissance, le mouvement islamique appelle à boycotter les élections législatives et engage un bras de fer avec le premier ministre qui maintient le calendrier du scrutin.

Dans un communiqué publié dimanche dernier, les Frères musulmans (FM) ont dénoncé la dégradation de la situation générale dans le pays, en particulier « le recul de la démocratie et les atteintes aux libertés publiques, l'accélération par le régime de la normalisation avec Israël et l'aggravation de la crise économique ». Ils dénoncent aussi la corruption du pouvoir et les restrictions croissantes qui touchent les partis politiques. Enfin, selon le mouvement islamique, les différents gouvernements depuis 1993 ont tout fait « marginaliser » le rôle du pouvoir législatif (à travers la loi électorale dite de la voix unique) ainsi que les institutions de la société civile.

Majali : «chacun est libre»

Le communiqué des FM, qualifié par certains de « programme électoral », exige sept mesures « pour corriger la situation » : des réformes constitutionnelles, l'abrogation de la loi électorale et de la loi sur la presse et les publications et le redressement de la situation économique. L'annonce de cet appel au boycott a eu l'effet d'une bombe dans les milieux politiques : certains commentateurs dénoncent cette attitude et souhaitent qu'elle soit révisée, d'autres la soutiennent et la trouvent indispensable pour rectifier les erreurs politiques majeures commises ces dernières années par le pouvoir exécutif. Néanmoins tout le monde pointe du doigt les répercussions de cette prise de position, radicale et inédite de la part de la plus grande force politique et populaire du pays.



Les Frères musulmans représentent une force politique très populaire. Ils gardent une forte influence sur le parti du Front d'Action Islamique.

Immédiatement les autres partis politiques de l'opposition ont été tentés de suivre les recommandations des FM. Mais aucune ligne officielle et unanime n'a encore été dégagée.

Le premier ministre Abdel Salam Majali, ainsi que d'autres membres de son gouvernement, ont préféré jouer l'indifférence en affirmant que « les élections auront lieu et que tout le monde est libre d'y participer ou de les boycotter ». Et le chef de gouvernement a encore confirmé cette semaine le maintien des élections à la date prévue par la Constitution (novembre prochain). De son côté, le bureau exécutif du Front d'Action Islamique (FAI), le parti officiel des Frères musulmans, pourrait

prendre sa décision dès samedi prochain. Il est très probable qu'il boycottera les élections. La plupart des partis de l'opposition (de gauche et nationale) seraient d'autant plus encouragés à lui emboîter le pas en toute connaissance de cause.

FAI : risques de scission
Evidemment le jeu politique « à la jordanienne » ne se limite pas à la confrontation : il est toujours possible de trouver des compromis. Déjà une rencontre pourrait avoir lieu entre le roi Hussein et la direction des Frères musulmans. Et le gouvernement, qui souhaite ouvrir le dialogue, a invité la conférence à revoir sa décision. D'un autre côté, le pouvoir exécutif ne manque de moyens de pression sur les islamistes :

dans les arcanes dirigeantes. L'interdiction de la confrérie des FM n'est pas écartée. Plus simplement, le gouvernement a tout intérêt à guetter l'éclatement du FAI. Une partie de la direction du parti islamique reste en effet favorable à la participation aux élections. Qu'il cède ou non à la pression des FM, dans les deux cas le FAI risque la scission. Quoi qu'il en soit, l'appel au boycott semble désormais irréversible. C'est en tout cas la conviction d'un membre des Frères musulmans : « Les gens croient que la décision a été prise par les « foucons » ; or, au contraire, ce sont les modérés qui soutiennent cette nouvelle orientation ».

Suleiman Sweiss

Politique

Femmes au pouvoir ne pensent pas qu'à elles

Un colloque sur les femmes dans le monde arabe s'est tenu la semaine dernière à Amman. Parmi les intervenantes, trois députées aux accents féministes plutôt discrets.

Qu'elles soient journalistes, chercheurs ou députées, les femmes reconnaissent toutes la nécessité de leur émancipation dans le monde politique arabe. Mais curieusement une fois qu'elles sont arrivées au pouvoir, la cause féminine passe souvent au second plan de leurs discours. Ainsi, Rawya Ashawah, députée palestinienne à Gaza, préfère considérer la cause des femmes dans le cadre de la lutte que mène le peuple palestinien pour sa liberté et son indépendance. Selon elle, il faut donner la primauté aux problèmes sociaux qui découlent de l'occupation israélienne : « dans mon action au sein du parlement, je compte représenter toute la société sans aucune distinction ».

Rawya Ashawah révoque même pas la condition de la femme. Ce qui l'intéresse avant tout, c'est la situation politique vis-à-vis d'Israël et le développement démocratique du parlement « notre conseil législatif palestinien (CLP) est encore immature et ne jouit pas des mêmes pouvoirs que les autres parlements du monde en raison des statuts imposés par les accords d'Oslo ».

Priorité la paix sociale
Pour la Yéménite Awras Naji, c'est un peu la même chose. Ce médecin et membre du Parti du Congrès Général (PCG) appartient à la majorité parlementaire. Elle est l'une des deux femmes élues au parlement yéménite. Uo exploit qui ne l'encourage pas pour autant à monter davantage au créneau quand il s'agit de défendre les femmes. Le docteur Naji considère que le progrès social et le processus démocratique sont

prioritaires dans un pays sous-développé tel que le Yémen. Ensuite seulement vient la cause des femmes. Et comme pour justifier sa position, elle ajoute : « après tout, j'ai été élue par des femmes mais aussi des hommes ».

Awras Naji entend pourtant bien améliorer la condition de la femme yéménite mais toujours en accord avec son parti, impossible de jouer, semble-t-il, les francs-tireurs. Elle rappelle cependant son parcours de la combattante pour remporter le scrutin : la propagande antiféministe, la pression des milieux religieux, « il y a encore des forces sociales et politiques qui s'opposent à tout changement des conditions de vie des femmes », reconnaît-elle.

Une femme, politique algérienne était attendue également à Amman. Louisa Hanoum est une toute nouvelle députée de l'opposition « porte-parole » d'un parti travailliste. Elle a dû annuler précipitamment son voyage pour discuter du règlement intérieur du parlement algérien. Dans le texte qu'elle avait préparé pour son intervention, elle a écrit : « je suis consciente de la nature de cette guerre qui mène le peuple algérien dans son ensemble. C'est pour cette raison que je soutiens la paix et que je refuse que les droits des femmes soient bafoués par ceux qui gouvernent ; soient utilisés comme alibi pour réprimer une contestation de la société ». Les islamistes (NDLR) Pour Louisa Hanoum également, la paix sociale est, à priori, au-delà de toute autre revendication corporatiste. ■

Hussein Abu-Ramman

Culture

Jérash 97 sonne le réveil du théâtre nord

Le festival de la ville antique est l'événement culturel de l'année dans toute la région. Cette sixième édition, du 23 juillet au 10 août, tentera de plaire à la fois aux spectateurs locaux et étrangers : chanteurs-vedettes, groupes folkloriques internationaux, théâtre anglo-saxon... Mais l'attraction 97 sera surtout le théâtre nord qui rouvre ses portes après 2000 ans de silence.

Sur les murs, Apollon est à la harpe, un autre joue de la flûte et encore un autre, du tambourin. Les sculptures du théâtre nord rappellent que cette enceinte était un lieu de musique, il y a 2000 ans. Construit à l'origine pour accueillir un orchestre, le théâtre reprend ses droits sur son histoire grâce au festival de Jérash. Groupes de jazz, de danse, de musique de chambre se produiront en effet sur cette nouvelle scène.

Avec une capacité d'environ 1500 spectateurs, le théâtre nord est plus petit que son homologue au sud. Construit en 162 après JC sous la forme d'un auditorium, il a été agrandi un siècle plus tard et transformé en amphithéâtre. Mais cette scène est ensuite négligée pendant la période byzantine. A l'époque, les lieux sacrés, tels que les mosquées et les églises, revêtaient plus d'importance qu'une simple place de musique. Le théâtre est alors utilisé comme réservoir d'eau ! En 717 après JC, nouvelle mésaventure, le monument est enterré 7 mètres sous terre à la suite d'un tremblement de terre.

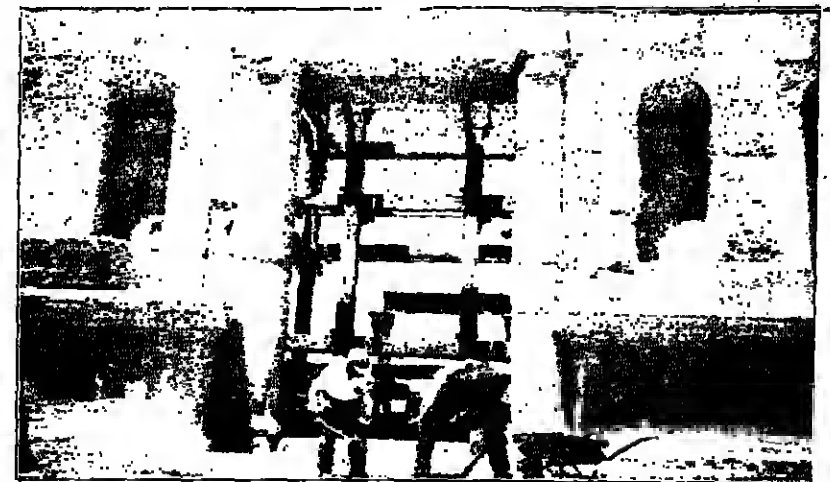
Une fosse reconstituée
Aujourd'hui complètement exhumé et restauré, le théâtre retrouve sa vocation première : la musique. Pendant plus de 10 ans, différentes équipes internationales d'archéologues se sont succédé pour remettre en état le théâtre. Et à partir de 1995, une

Portrait
Jeryes Samawi, la nouvelle inspiration du festival

A 40 ans, Jeryes Samawi n'est pas un jeune homme dans le festival de Jérash. Il y a déjà participé en tant que poète. Cette année, il a la lourde tâche de composer le programme des manifestations. Nommé pour la première fois directeur général adjoint du festival, c'est lui qui est chargé de choisir les artistes. Une responsabilité que Jeryes a acceptée sans hésiter : « J'ai une expérience de 10 ans en tant que poète. Son principal atout : la poésie. Pour lui, toutes les formes d'art sont reliées par cette même corde sensible. La poésie est partout présente, dans le paysage, dans la vie, dans les créations qui nous entourent, dans notre vie quotidienne en général ».

Mé en Jordanie, il a poursuivi ses études aux Etats-Unis où il a obtenu le baccalauréat en littérature, la philosophie et les médias. De retour dans le royaume hachémite, Jeryes Samawi s'est consacré à la télévision jordanienne et créé des émissions culturelles, en anglais et en arabe. Poète reconnu dans son pays, ses œuvres ont été publiées dans des revues jordanaises et plusieurs pays du Proche-Orient. Avant Jérash, il a participé à d'autres manifestations internationales, comme le festival de Marbel en Iraq ou encore celui des pays de la Méditerranée en Italie. Désormais, il agisse sa plume à la fois de poète et de directeur pour le théâtre antique. ■

B.S.



Pendant plus de 15 ans, les équipes d'archéologues internationaux se sont succédées à Jérash pour restaurer le théâtre nord. En 97, il peut enfin ouvrir ses portes.

adjoint du festival (voir ci-contre). Par exemple, le théâtre sud, le plus vaste, est réservé aux vedettes et aux spectacles populaires. Les chanteurs Wael Kfoury, Asl Hallani (Liban) et Abdul Majid Abdallah (Arabie Saoudite) ainsi que les groupes de danse circassien et espagnol (flamenco) qui attirent toujours un large public s'y produiront. Et la nuit d'ouverture sera assurée par Les Lumière de Jérash, un ensemble de chanteurs du pays.

Enfin, l'amphithéâtre d'Artemis sera surtout consacré au théâtre avec notamment deux pièces de Shakespeare : Le Songe d'une nuit d'été par une troupe britannique et Beaucoup de bruit pour rien, par une compagnie américaine. Une occasion unique d'observer comment l'œuvre du grand Will est appréhendée de part et d'autre de l'Atlantique. ■

Bayan Salman

C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

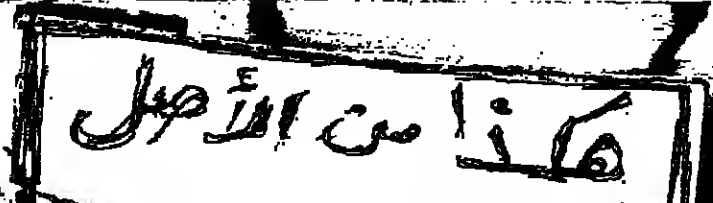
Exposition

Jusqu'au 29 juillet au Centre culturel français, la photographe Jan Kassay expose ses plus beaux clichés de fleurs.

Cinéma

Cycle consacré à l'acteur Lino Ventura. Le ruffian, de José Giovanni (1982). Un mineur canadien reste le seul survivant après un hold-up. Il tue les pilards et garde l'argent. Lundi 21 juillet à 20h30 au Centre culturel français.

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645 380



Gianni Versace: Death of 'King of Frock 'n' Roll'

Continued from page 1

Gianni Versace, together with a handful of names, symbolizes the success of Italian fashion all over the world," Armani said, adding that his rival's death "has left me in a state of shock." A fashion show, oo Rome's Spanish Steps featuring top international models was postponed in a gesture of mourning. Versace, who has been suffering from cancer, had declined to attend the Rome show on health grounds, preferring to stay with his male companion in Miami.

Versace's global empire reached from its design operation in Milan to a production network across Italy and more than 165 boutiques from Tokyo to New York's Fifth Avenue. Its accessory branches include Gianni Versace Profumi—makers of Versace L'Homme and other fragrances—and Versace Make-Up, the company's recent venture into the beauty business. There are 23 Versace stores, carrying his less expensive line.

For all his celebrity courting and globe-trotting—he had palatial homes in Milan, Como (Italy's lake country), New York and Miami Beach—Versace claimed to thrive on his sensitivity to the mass market. "The roots of Italian design are mainstream people," he recently told Time magazine. "In Italy, you have to relate to real people, while in France the designers seem to relate only to transvestites on the (fashion show) runways. We may have less fantasy, but we're more realistic."

It was a lucrative formula. Sales rose 23.5 percent last year to \$485 million, 80 percent of it from sales abroad. The company reported \$40 million profits after taxes.

Yet Versace SpA remained largely in the hands of three people—Gianni, his brother, Santo, and sister, Donatella. Some industry specialists say the company now looks suddenly vulnerable. "A lot of the value in Versace is tied up in Gianni himself—not exactly a one-man show, but he was very much the front man," said Paul Gordon, a luxury goods analyst at the Italian brokerage house IMI Sigeco.

Versace's death is expected to delay a long-awaited move by the family to restructure and become a public company with shares listed on the Milan and possibly the New York Stock Exchange next summer. Santo Versace, the chairman and managing director, once explained that by going public the company would "automatically acquire a second and third generation, a commitment to carry Versace beyond its founders."

Santo and Donatella have two children each; Gianni, who never married, had none.

Industry analysts say investors should watch fashion shows over the next year for clues of the company's ability to carry on.

Versace staged a show in Florence last month, bringing out a men's collection. His couture collection for women was shown in Paris last weekend.

"His influence will be in that next collection," said Michael Swift, a management consultant for Kurt Salmon Associates in Milan. "The collection to watch is the one after that—the first



one he won't have a hand in."

Some fashion critics say Donatella is capable of stepping into her brother's shoes. She already designs the company's successful Versus line and is credited with inspiring some of Gianni's more outrageous looks. "When you have a really strong business and a designer with the same name, I think there's a very real chance that, even if they lose a step or two, they'll continue just fine," Swift said.

The last time the Italian fashion world was jolted by violent death was two years ago when Mr Maurizio Gucci was murdered in Milan. ■

LA Times-Washington Post News Service

Foster passes hearing test in 'Contact'

By Kenneth Turan

HOLLYWOOD—Whatever's Out There has always fascinated people Down Here, especially movie people. But these days, instead of watching the skies (as those 1950s films encouraged everyone to do), people are listening to them. "Contact" tells us what one woman heard and how the world reacted.

Starring Jodie Foster in an exceptional performance as the radio astronomer who listened, and directed by Robert Zemeckis in his first outing since "Forrest Gump," "Contact" is superior popular filmmaking, both polished and effective. But despite its success and its serious intentions, it's finally a movie where the storytelling makes more of an impact than the story.

Balanced between wanting to deal with the philosophical and scientific issues that concerned Carl Sagan, who wrote the original 1985 novel, and making sure to satisfy the cravings of a mass audience, "Contact" manages to have it both ways most but not all of the time. Not as profound as it would like to be, with a decidedly soft central message, it is nevertheless thoughtful and intelligent for the Hollywood summer entertainment it basically is.

Expertly directed by Zemeckis, who makes this kind of prestige studio production look easier than it is, "Contact" never loses touch with its "who are we and why are we here" sense of wonder about the universe that is its greatest strength. While it has a strongly sentimental side and wanders into conventional territory more often than it realizes, "Contact" manages an almost gyroscopic ability to right itself whenever absolutely necessary.

Much of this is due to Foster, whose skill and presence seem to increase with each picture and who dominates "Contact" in the best possible sense. Her portrayal of astronomer Ellie Arroway, a character she knows intimately, demonstrates why no one is more persuasive at conveying intelligence and single-minded passion to the point of confrontational anger. Foster is "Contact's" lodestar, and when she is on screen, the film can't help but be engrossing.

Arroway is first encountered in a prologue as an 8-year-old shortwave radio buff with a gentle father (David Morse) and an eagerness (well-conveyed by young actress Jena Malone) to hear from far-away places. Dad also ignites her interest in extraterrestrials with a folksy "if it is just us, seems like an awful waste of space" homily the film likes enough to use three times.

As an adult astronomer who has come to trust her work more than people, Arroway has turned into someone accurately characterized as "brilliant,



driven, a major pain in the ass... obsessed with a field that's considered professional suicide." That would be her affiliation with SETI, the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, a group of scientists who listen doggedly for a signal from the skies.

Arroway's superior, National Science Foundation head David Drumlin (Tom Skerritt), is markedly unsympathetic, typically greeting her with a dismissive, "Still waiting for E.T. to call?" A further run-in with Drumlin leads Arroway to reclusive billionaire S.R. Hadden (an assured John Hurt), who lives on an airplane and knows exactly what he wants to do with all his money.

Arroway also connects with a different kind of man, Palmer Joss, played by heartthrob du jour Matthew McConaughey. A kind of self-defrocked priest, "a man of the cloth without the cloth" who "couldn't live with the whole celibacy thing," Joss is a writer who feels the modern passion for technology and science is corroding the world's moral values.

Though the science vs. religion, does-God-exist discussions he has with Arroway are some of "Contact's" most interesting, Joss has a tendency to come off as a ruggedly handsome signboard for the film's ideas. Also, the James V. Hart and Michael Goldenberg script upgrades Joss to much more of a conventional love interest than he was in Sagan's book. It's a transition that has its bumpy aspects as Joss, a construct more than a fully fleshed-out character, pops in and out of events in a not-always-convincing way.

Clocking in at 2 1/2 hours, "Contact" is most alive during its central section, when Arroway, sitting next to a photogenic group of dish-shaped radio telescopes near Socorro, N.M., and hoping as per usual for a sign from the cosmos, hears what is unmistakably a signal from the beyond.

The source turns out to be Vega, a spot 26 light-years away, and how Arroway and her colleagues take the numerous steps necessary to decipher that message, what it says, and how Arroway fights to retain a part in its implications, are conveyed in a rush of images and sequences that are so invigorating it's possible to be swept away and overlook how skillfully it's all been put together.

For this, much credit has to go to director Zemeckis, cinematographer Don Burgess and editor Arthur Schmidt. The wizardly storytelling style they employ is seamless and involving, with all manner of elegant camera moves. Even bravura sequences like tracking Foster as she runs from her car through the lab to check on the signal (a scene that according to American Cinematographer was shot in two separate locations months apart) are so intrinsic to the narrative they never seem showy or excessive.

"Contact" has difficulty maintaining this momentum through its extended final segment. Partly it's that the initial section, the quest, makes the best use of the strengths of Foster's characterization, of Arroway's almost painful eagerness to make intergalactic contact. Also—and this goes to the heart of what "Contact" is lacking—the idea of the search turns out to be more involving than the knowledge that ends up being found.

Not helping is the tendency of the plot (despite appearances by James Woods as the president's national security adviser and Angela Bassett as a White House power) to get increasingly contrived and unsatisfying as the story unfolds. Even more than usually involving visual effects (supervised by Ken Ralston) can't fill that gap.

Still, when you think of how little to chew on summer films usually give us, "Contact" has to shine by comparison. ■

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